

**Dr. Lucas Hinojosa Oral History
Interview Transcription**

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For our oral history interview, I spoke with Dr. Lucas Hinojosa about his family's properties and about his life as a child growing up. Dr. Hinojosa provided us with many warranty deeds, family tree layout, and many pictures of his family. During my interview, I was able to ask him a series of questions that were able to help us with researching his family and land history in the South Texas area.

Lucas Hinojosa was born February 24, 1937 in the Starr County region. At the age of eight years old he moved to Hidalgo, Texas. Dr. Hinojosa later moved to Edinburg, Texas where he attended and graduated from Edinburg High School in 1953. After graduating from Edinburg High he attended the University of Texas Pan American and shortly after transferred to Texas A&M in Kingsville Texas where he studied animal science and agriculture and minored in chemistry, physics, and biology. His main focus was studying the land soils. In 1958 he returned to help his father with their family farm.

While helping his father with the farm, he also became an instructor at elementary, junior highs, and high schools. After receiving his masters at Texas A&M in Kingsville, Dr. Hinojosa received a certification in education teaching and went on to teach education at Weslaco Elementary until the age of forty-eight. He later went on to teach special education for the next eleven years. Lucas Hinojosa started the Labor Migrant Movement in 1968 and was the first to conduct the Teaching of Reading between Mexico and the United States, which helped start the bilingual education in Edinburg, Texas. It later became to be known as TABE, Texas Association of Bilingual Educators. With the help of Dr. Alejo Salinas, he was able to establish NABE, National Association of Bilingual Education and became involved in the Yellow Bus System.

Lucas Hinojosa went on to get his PH.D at the University of Colorado, and afterwards became involved with the issue of segregation in schools. Atto Longlois and Dr. Lucas Hinojosa rebelled against segregation and the fact that Hispanics were mistreated in schools. Dr. Hinojosa recalls, “ At one point Weslaco separated their elementary schools to divide Hispanics from Caucasians which forced them to attend schools on opposite sides of the town”. This motivated him to become involved in a lot of the laws that were being written for the Civil Right’s Movement in Washington D.C. He also became involved in the desegregation and integration of Caucasians and Hispanics in the classroom by helping write the ESA. With the assistance of University of Texas Pan American colleagues, Dr. Barry Thompson and Dr. Fred Cunningham, he was able to desegregate many schools.

After many years of hard work, Dr. Hinojosa was finally able to create a “Blue Campus” a reliable campus at Roosevelt School in Weslaco, Texas. From there he was able to re-establish Bilingual Education. Shortly after, he worked on the Migrant Program at Pan Am then went back to Weslaco where he then later went to get involved in Hidalgo. HOST, Helping One Student to Succeed, became Dr. Hinojosa’s next big project. HOST was a systematic reading program and by 1990, the program became popular among forty-four states as well as Puerto Rico.

Dr. Hinojosa’s ancestors were granted land grants and ranches to people from Mexico to help against the bandidos, Apaches, Koronkawas, and the Comanche. Dr. Hinojosa’s ancestors include Don Jose Matias Longoria Chapa¹, who along with his two brothers, received Porciones 93,94,95 from King Carlos III in 1767 in what is now know

¹ Appendix B

as La Grulla, Texas Starr County. Dr. Hinojosa still retains some of the land left by his ancestors which is know as “La Hacienda Hinojosa” on Highway 281 fourteen and a half miles north of Edinburh The original colonists raised cattle to sell the hide and drove cattle to Kansas City in the late 1800’s and 1900’s; the government later contracted them to sell mules and oxen.

Natalia L. Hinojosa², Dr. Hinojosa’s mother, was born on July 27th, 1909. Natalia Hinojosa attended St. Mary and UT Austin, and was a renowned pianist and very well known organist as well. The governor of Texas at the time, Miriam A. Ferguson, invited Natalia L. Hinojosa to play at the governor’s ball when she won the elections. Natalia L. Hinojosa passed away on July 17th, 1966.

Dr. Hinojosa also has a ranch in Matamoros, Tamaulipas that is named Rancho Longoreno. Dr. Hinojosa spent his summers as a teen riding horses with his sister and there were plenty of cattle there as well, it is precisely in this ranch that Dr. Hinojosa has found many arrowheads and even found bullion from the age of the Spanish conquistadores. Dr. Hinojosa’s original land grants have been reduced over time, because of his ancestors selling them over time. Dr. Hinojosa also has mineral rights from the four acres that he owns in Brooks County, and the Hacienda Longorena. In the past, all males worked the land depending on the age; a position was given to them.

Dr. Hinojosa married in 1959 and during this time he worked in the bodegas and built his home with his own money on his land. He then had his first son, which was Lucas Jr in 1962, which ended becoming a vet later on in his life, and his second son Benny who was born the year after, which ended up becoming a pharmaceutical

² Refer to Appendix A

representative, Natalie who was born in 1965 who ended up becoming a book broker curriculum specialist, and Omar who was born in 1969 who ended up becoming a pharmaceutical representative. Natalie, a book broker, sells curriculums to schools, and works in La Joya and teaching reading. She sells curriculums and teaches staff on how to use them. Natalie has three daughters and one son and is very active with the schools and participates in volunteer work. She represents seven different companies and introduces them to principals and superintendents to sell the school curriculums that she designs along with her father Dr. Hinojosa.

In the late 1800's the government started hauling the early settlers from the Rio Grande Valley. The settlers then settled in the West Coast because of the search for gold that was gripping the nation at that time. At this time in the Rio Grande Valley, water was controlled and used for farming by Amistad and Falcon Dam and in 1905 land was so fertile, sugar cane was entered in Wald's Fair and came in 1st place. The local deserts were called the Wild Horse Deserts. The Valley is instrumental for providing food source for not only the United States, but for the world as well, especially Brownsville.

Clinton Magnus and Othal Brand came down to the Valley as sharecroppers and farmed land that belonged to early settlers. They lived in a time where they used mechanization and harvested big plots of land. These men took advantage of the Brazero program, in which many Mexicans came in to the United States to fill in labor shortages; these men ended up actually erasing land grants and records to secure lands for themselves. At this time, whites controlled most public offices in the Valley, the people that controlled the offices that held land records were white, and so Magnus and Brand,

used this to their advantage and illegally took over plots of lands that were not theirs to begin with.

Dr. Hinojosa provided us with information about some of his porcion, that he still owns to this day, and with stories about his youth and experiences over his life that helped us complete his oral history.